

**Testimony of Mary W. Winslow**  
**Appropriations Committee**  
**February 18, 2016**

My name is Mary W. Winslow, I represent Torrington, CT, and have lived there for 23 years. Torrington has a psycho-social clubhouse by the name of Prime Time House, of which I hope you are familiar. I have been a member of PTH for some 20 years and have advocated for people with mental health issues since then. I feel that I am in a position to tell you more about what the clubhouse has to offer.

Prime Time House is a place where they assist you with employment, education, housing, socialization, and meaningful relationships. By meaningful relationships, I mean they offer a place to go. Therefore, I feel that I am in a position to present to you on this subject.

Prime Time House services some 18 communities in the Northwest corner of CT, therefore some of you legislatures may be familiar with PTH.

I have been a member of PTH for 20 years and I moved to Torrington from Fairfield County when I was struggling with my own mental illness. At PTH I found people who were struggling also. I attended regularly there for some years until I had sufficiently recovered to the point where I could find other avenues of support, namely friends, family, and the like. I was able with Prime Time's help to find part-time employment and now I would like to be able to give back to those people who mean so much to me.

My diagnosis is BiPolar, manic depression, which means that I suffer from mood swing disorders from devastating lows to extreme highs. Those lows caused me to consider taking my own life several times. It could have devastating where I would shop to excessive extremes. Had sexual encounters, which also could have been devastating.

NOW, why am I here.....I am here because we have been dealt a bad rap!!! Clubhouses, mental health facilities, even the Department of Mental Health and

Addiction Services (DMHAS), I am going to say this.....YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELVES !!!!

Ashamed that you have NOT supported these programs in a way to help people with mental illness so that they can conduct themselves and have rewarding lives. We have all seen the devastation that has occurred in Newtown and cities and towns all over the country.

Rewarding lives, where they can work and support themselves so the state does not have to. You have closed all of the state hospitals some years ago promising to put the monies into the communities, but where did that money go?

There is a non-profit organization called, Keep the Promise, which is in existence to have the state support people with mental illness. Perhaps you are familiar with it.

There is another non-profit, which is equally as important, if not more so called, Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP), with whom I have just completed my Advance Directive, my wishes for the rest of my life. It is a legal document. It has been notarized and several of the employees of Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP), came to my home where we worked on preparing such a document. Something like this would have cost perhaps \$1500, if I were to go to a private lawyer.

Many of people with mental illness because they can not work are living on disability are unable to afford such services. I know this because I just had my Will done just after the death of my son, Christopher Hickey, who took his own life after a bout with mental illness. The results of all this could be devastating.

Let me say that DMHAS which supports Prime Time and CLRP, has unfairly gone awry.

CLRP is a necessary watchdog for people with mental illness. Whether in the community dealing with housing issues to in patient work at Connecticut Valley Hospital, where there are young adults who are committed involuntarily. Probably treated without the dignity that they deserve who need conservators to assist them. CLRP also appeals Social Security denials in order to get an individual

the benefits that they may be entitled to in order to survive out in the community.

In conclusion, I would like to say thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of people with mental illness and I hope that you will take my remarks seriously and to heart. Please know that I purposely made my remarks succinct so as to NOT to detain you any further.